

INDIA SPEAKS

(Monthly Digest of Official Indian Statements on Middle East)

No. 32

March 2012

BILATERAL ISSUES

a. EGYPT

1. External Affairs Minister to visit Cairo for 6th Joint Commission Meeting with Egypt, New Delhi, 29 February 2012

The External Affairs Minister Mr. S.M. Krishna will be on an official visit to Egypt from March 2-4, 2012. During the visit, the External Affairs Minister will co-chair the 6th Meeting of the Joint Commission with the Foreign Minister of Egypt, on March 4, 2012.

The Joint Commission Meeting will undertake a comprehensive review of India-Egypt cooperation in the areas of Trade & Economy, Science & Technology, Culture and Information Technology. The delegation to the Joint Commission includes officials from a number of Ministries and Departments keeping in view our multifaceted cooperation with Egypt. A number of agreements are likely to be signed during the visit.

The External Affairs Minister is scheduled to call on H.E. Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, the Chief of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces of Egypt. He will also meet H.E. Dr. Nabil El Araby, Secretary General, and League of Arab States.

In addition, the External Affairs Minister will interact with the leadership of major Egyptian political parties, opinion makers and Indian community representatives. He will also unveil a portrait of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in Cairo, as part of Tagore's 150th birth anniversary celebrations.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi

<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530219062>

b. IRAN

2. India-Iran trade unlikely to be derailed by Delhi bombing: Anand Sharma, Islamabad, 15 February 2012

Trade between New Delhi and Tehran is unlikely to be affected by a recent bomb attack on Israeli targets in the Indian capital, Indian's commerce minister said on Wednesday. "I don't think that trade and these things are inter-related..." he told Reuters.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-Iran-trade-unlikely-to-be-derailed-by-Delhi-bombing-Anand-Sharma/articleshow/11899190.cms>

3. Wyant Lecture by Ambassador Nirupama Rao at the Emmanuel College, Boston – “Role of India in the changing landscape in the 21st Century”, Washington D.C, 15 February 2012

... I would like to say a few words about Iran in this regard. We have consistently said that Iran must cooperate with the IAEA to resolve all the outstanding issues about its nuclear program that continue to raise doubts in the minds of the international community. We appreciate that Iran has right to utilize the benefits of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. But, this right has to be exercised in conformity with international obligations that a state has taken. And Iran, as a non-nuclear weapon state party to NPT has certain obligations that it must comply with, fully and transparently. But, we also hope that these issues are resolved peacefully. As some observers have noted, what we need is diplomatic drive and creativity more than ever to address the situation. The talk of war will not help a solution and only erodes global cohesion. As a near neighbour, and our only surface access to Central Asia and Afghanistan, engagement with Iran is of relevance and meaning to us. And, even as our imports of Iranian crude continue to decline and are currently under 10% of our overall imports, it does constitute a significant share of our oil imports. We do believe that our relationship with Iran is neither inconsistent with our non-proliferation objectives, nor is it in contradiction with the relationships that we have with our friends in West Asia or with the United States...

Source: Embassy of India, Washington D.C,

<http://www.indianembassy.org/prdetail1867/wyant-lecture-by-ambassador-nirupama-rao-at-the-emmanuel-college%2C-boston---andquot%3Brole-of-india-in-the-changing-landscape-in-the-21st-centuryandquot%3B>

4. “India as a Global Power: Contending Views from India” jointly organized by the Centre for a New American Security, in partnership with The George Washington University’s Rising Powers Initiative, Washington DC, 23 February 2012

Questioner 4: Lalit Jha with PTI: can you give us a sense of talks you have having with US on the issue of Iran. U.S is asking you to reduce India’s dependence on Iran oil but India says it can’t do that.

Ambassador Rao: ...Talking of Iran and the question from Lalit, well, we are in touch with the US government and of course, closely monitoring the developing situation concerning Iran. Iran is an important source for our petroleum, crude petrol imports. These imports have declined a little, not very much, but a little over the last couple of years –last two years or so. We probably have to see, I mean, given the sanctions and given the difficulties in operating banking channels Vis-a'-Vis Iran, obviously the volume cannot be expected to go up in such a situation. It may well be that, there may be a further decline. It may well be so. India is a responsible country. India works with the rest of the international community. We abide by the rules. Obviously we don’t play outside the system on these issues, but it must be remembered that the Gulf region is terribly important for India. We have six million Indians working there. Their remittances come home to their families; they are important for our economy. It’s a source of our energy imports. You know, India is basically an energy importing country. Look at the Mangalore refinery, for instance, it is geared just to work with the Iranian crude. So it is going to take time to sort of readjust and to see how we can move away from old patterns of how we operate on these issues. We are not for confrontation, we are not for military confrontation, we would not like to see the situation escalate to a point of no return and I think the avenues of diplomacy and statecraft have not been exhausted, and I think definitely Iran has to hear, you know, the voice of the international community clearly on this issue. Things should not come to a pass where, you know, it becomes very difficult to retract positions.

As far as Iran’s nuclear programme is concerned, we said very very clearly, we do not want Iran to weaponize; we don’t want Iran to go down that path at all. As an NPT member, it has certain rights to develop its nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but it has to work with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the rest of the international community to assuage the concerns that have been raised so that, you know, we can then move forward, hopefully, to a situation where these tensions are eased...

Source: Embassy of India, Washington D.C

<http://www.indianembassy.org/prdetail1847/transcript-of-question-and-answer-session-at-the-seminar-andquot%3BIndia-as-a-global-power%3A-contending-views-from->

[indiaandquot%3B-jointly-organized-by-the-center-for-a-new-american-security%2C-in-partnership-with-the-george-washington-universityandrsquo%3Bs-rising-powers-initiative](#)

5. India not facing any pressure on buying oil from Iran said Oil Minister S Jaipal Reddy, New Delhi, 27 February 2012

India is not facing any external pressure on buying crude oil from Iran and will abide by UN sanctions only, not those imposed by any bloc of nations; Oil Minister S Jaipal Reddy said at the meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee. He further said that there is “no outside pressure in dealing with Iran.”

Source: The Economic Times, New Delhi

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-02-27/news/31104349_1_oil-prices-energy-sector-domestic-energy-supplies

c. IRAQ

6. India committed to deepen and elevate its relations with Iraq: Anand Sharma, New Delhi, 27 February 2012

The Union Minister of Commerce, Industry and Textiles Mr. Anand Sharma said that India is committed to deepen and elevate its relations with Iraq. He proposed during his meeting with the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Dr Rowsch N Shaways, here today, that “the Joint Business Council between India-Iraq needs to be activated so that the interaction between businessmen of both the countries could be maintained regularly. The apex Chambers of Commerce should interact on regular basis for arranging Joint Business Meetings to boost the bilateral trade.”

The visiting Deputy Prime Minister conveyed that India is the biggest importer of Iraqi oil and this is a firm foundation on which we can further build our economic engagement. He emphasized that there is a need to diversify the trade basket and proposed food, Construction, minerals, IT, pharmaceuticals, energy and Automobile as part of diversifying the existing trade basket. He invited Indian firms to Iraq either in JV or independently. “We are open in all formats and will welcome Indian participation in our reconstruction programme”, the Deputy Prime Minister said.

Mr. Sharma emphasized that India wants to partner with Iraq in all these areas. “We will be happy to see Indian Companies being encouraged in Iraq’s reconstruction programme and we will also point our companies in that direction” said the Indian Minister. He mentioned that for capacity building of Iraq India is annually providing 120 slots under the Indian Technical Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme to train Government of Iraq officials. Similarly, India is offering 50 scholarships to Iraqi students for higher studies in India under the ‘Cultural Exchange Programme Scholarship Scheme’ (CEP) and the ‘General Cultural Scholarships Scheme (GCSS) organizes by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. The

Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOC) has been providing training in India to the Iraqi officials on various subjects related to downstream oil sector.

Indian Ambassador in Iraq informed the meeting that every day about 160 medical visas are issued to Iraqi citizens. The people to people contacts are developing fast as are also the academic linkages between the two countries particularly in the medical and engineering fields. India has become the most favourite destination for Iraqis for seeking quality medical treatment. More than 28000 Iraqis visited India in 2010 for medical treatment, education and tourism.

Both side agreed to revamp Indian presence in Baghdad International Trade fair. The Trade Minister of Iraq Dr Kheer Allah Hassan Babkr who was attending the meeting said there should be no need of third party in India Iraq trade and Indian company should be able to deal directly with the players in Iraq. He singled out Government firms in the fields of Construction and Auto mobile which can deal with Indian firms directly.

Iraq is an important trading partner of India in West Asia. Bilateral trade has registered a 100% increase over the last five years. The total trade has increased from US\$ 5.7 billion in 2006-07 to US\$ 9.7 billion in 2010-11. The exports from India have gone up from US\$ 203.99 million in 2006-07 to US\$ 738.65 million in 2010-11. Similarly, imports from Iraq have gone up from US\$ 5.5 billion in 2006-07 to US\$ 9.0 billion 2010-11. The top five exportable items from India to Iraq are Manufactures of Metals, Electronic Goods, Rice-Basmati, Meat & Preparations, and Machinery & Instruments etc. Similarly top five importable items from Iraq to India are Petroleum Crude & Products (99.88 %), Fruits & Nuts-Exclusive Cashew Nuts, Sulphur & Unroasted Iron Pyres, Wool Raw, Organic Chemicals etc. Both the leaders agreed that the bilateral trade does not reflect the full potential and can be further exploited to mutual advantage of both the countries.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=80566>

d. ISRAEL

7. External Affair Minister's statement on incident in New Delhi involving Israeli mission personnel, New Delhi, 13 February 2012

We have just received information about an unfortunate incident that took place a little while earlier in which a staff member's family of the Israeli establishment in Delhi has been injured. She has been rushed to the hospital and we are awaiting further information about the well being of the victim. In the meanwhile, India very strongly condemns such incidents and it is going to be fully investigated and the culprits will be brought to justice at the earliest. I have just spoken to the Israeli Foreign Minister and I have reassured the

Israeli Foreign Minister that the law of the land will take its course. The investigation has already started and we will continue with it and then keep him posted as and when we get progress report of the investigation.

Thank You.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119018>

8. India and Israel sign a joint Declaration on Cooperation and Exchange between the Two Countries in the Field of Water Technology, New Delhi, 13 February 2012

India-Israel bilateral relationship has become increasingly extensive and broad-based in the last 20 years. Relations have deepened and progressed in all areas of activities including political, economic and cultural relations, cooperation in agriculture and water management. As India and Israel commemorate the 20th anniversary of establishment of full diplomatic relations, the visit of Mr. Kamal Nath, Minister of Urban Development to Israel from 12-14 February 2012 provided an excellent opportunity for a survey of cooperation in Infrastructure development, water treatment and purification technologies.

During the visit, India and Israel signed a Joint Declaration aimed at bringing about long-lasting cooperation and exchange between the two countries in the field of water technology.

Under the Joint Declaration, an India-Israel Working Group will be created with the objective of long-term planning, development, improvement and sharing of technology and other matters related to water, waste water and sewage management. The Working Group will also discuss the possibility of demonstration project, pilot study and establishing commercial demonstration centre, which would serve as a platform for presenting innovative technologies to assist in addressing the challenges faced by India, as also matters relating to quality-standard for drinking water, treatment of waste water and re-use of treated waste water.

Mr. Kamal Nath visited Israel on the invitation of Mr. Shalom Simhon, Minister of Industry, Trade and Labour of Israel. The visit is aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two countries in the Urban Development sector such as housing, urban planning, water supply, sewage management, water treatment, etc., through sharing of technology, experiences and best practices.

Earlier Minister Kamal Nath discussed possibilities of cooperation on energy, including renewable energy with Dr. Uzi Landau, Israel's Minister for Energy and Water Resources. The visiting Minister also held a meeting with Mr. Israel Katz, Minister of Transportation and Road Safety during which the two sides identified tangible areas of cooperation such as urbanization, town planning and related infrastructure.

In this context, the Minister visited the Shafdan Wastewater Treatment Plant in Rishon Le Zion, which is managed by Israeli National Water Company, Mekorot.

On 14th February, the Minister will speak at a business seminar on "India's Urbanization and Infrastructure Challenges and Opportunities". The seminar is being jointly organized by the Embassy of India in Israel, the Israel International Cooperation and Export Institute and the Ministry of Industries, Trade and Labour, Israel. Several Israeli companies will participate in the seminar.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=80291>

9. Visit of Mr. Kamal Nath, India's Minister of Urban Development, Tel Aviv, February 12-14, 2012

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Source: Embassy of India, Israel

<http://www.indembassy.co.il/Kamal%20Nath%20Visit.htm>

10. Government cancels Army chief's Israel visit, New Delhi, 29 February 2012

The government on Tuesday asked Chief of the Army Staff General V.K. Singh to cancel his visit to Israel mid-March, citing situation in West Asia. Minister of State for Defence M.M. Pallam Raju said the decision was taken as Syria was "restless and other things are happening in the region ... primarily because of what is happening in Syria, which is experiencing little turbulence. So I guess it is better ..."

Source: The Hindu, Chennai

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2943333.ece>

e. MOROCCO

11. Mr. Krishan Kumar appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Morocco, New Delhi, 22 February 2012

Mr. Krishan Kumar presently Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External affairs, has appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Morocco. He is expected to take up his assignment shortly.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi
<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530219044>

f. Oman

12. Press Release, Embassy of India, Muscat, 19 February 2012

All Indian expatriates, resident in and in-bound to the Sultanate of Oman are hereby advised to get documents issued in India attested/apostilled by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi or its designated authority with immediate effect. This has become mandatory now that both Republic of India and the Sultanate of Oman are member states of the Apostille Convention (1961).

The indicative list of documents issued in India which are required to be apostilled include birth/death/marriage certificates, driving licenses, Affidavits, Power of Attorney, documents and educational documents like degree, diploma, matriculation and secondary level certificates, etc. The documents already attested by authorities in India/ Embassy of India Muscat are not required to be apostilled again.

The Ministry of External Affairs, India is the nodal Ministry for consular legalization and Apostille of documents for use abroad. The Attestation Cell in the Ministry of External Affairs will accept pre-authenticated documents at the counter from 0930 to 1230 hours on all working days i.e. Monday to Friday. The attested/apostilled documents will be returned same day between 1600hrs to 1730 hrs.

The service is being provided by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi at the following locations:

(1)	Delhi	Ministry of External Affairs (Consular, Passport & Visa Division), Attestation Cell, Patiala House Annexe, Tilak Marg, New Delhi- 110011. Telefax: 011-2338-7931 Email: sooi@mea.gov.in, usexoi@mea.gov.in
(2)	Chennai	Ministry of External Affairs Branch Secretariat, 68, College Road, E.V.K. Sampath Mallaligai, 7 th Floor, Numgambakkam, Chennai -600006.

		Phone: 044-28252200, 28251323 Fax: 044-28251034 Email: usbs.chennai@mea.gov.in
(3)	Hyderabad	Ministry of External Affairs Branch Secretariat, B-Block, Room No. 310-312, Andhra Pradesh Secretariat, Hyderabad-500022 Phone: 040-23456051, Fax: 040-23451244 Email: hobs.hyderabad@mea.gov.in
(4)	Kolkata	Ministry of External Affairs Branch Secretariat, 2, Ballygunge, Park Road, Kolkata-700019 Phone: 033-22879701, 22802686, Fax: 033-22879703, Email: meacal@dataone.in
(5)	Guwahati	Ministry of External Affairs Branch Secretariat, House No. 307, Beltola, Basistha Road, Guwahati-781028. Phone: 0361-2229155, 2229156, Fax: 0361-2229157 Email: hobs.guwahati@mea.gov.in
(6)	Goa	Passport Office, Goa Phone: 0832-2437602 (General) Fax: 0832- 2437603 E-mail: rpo.panaji@mea.gov.in

Procedure: All original documents requiring attestation/apostille should be pre authenticated by the designated agencies in the State from where the document has been issued. The Ministry of External Affairs, India attests/apostilles the documents on the basis of the signature of the designated signing authorities of the State Government/Union Territory/Chambers of Commerce. The details of the Regional Authentication Centre (RACs) in the States/UTs from where the documents should first be authenticated are at www.indembo-man.org under 'Consular Services'. Only original documents are legalized/apostilled and not the photo copies.

In case of personal documents, Home Department/General Administration Department of respective States is the designated authorities for pre-authentication.

In case of educational documents, the documents should first be authenticated by the Education Department of the concerned State Government/Union Territory. In case of commercial documents, these are to be pre-authenticated by the respective Chambers of Commerce in India before these can be attested/apostilled by the Ministry of External Affairs.

The following supporting documents are to be submitted along with the original document. (i) A Photo copy of the document to be attested/apostilled, and (ii) A Photocopy of the Passport of the person whose document is required to be legalized/apostilled.

Fee for Apostille: A fee of Rs. 50/- is payable by means of Postal Order drawn in favour of Pay & Accounts Officer (PAO), Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, for Apostille on each document. Documents requiring attestation/apostillation should be submitted personally or through an authorized representative at the counters of the above-mentioned offices. In no case, the documents may be sent for attestation/apostillation by post/courier.

The documents apostilled by the Ministry of External Affairs of India and its designated authorities are no longer required to be submitted at the Embassy of India, Muscat for attestation.

Likewise, the documents issued by the authorities of the Sultanate of Oman to be used in India are required to be apostilled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman. These documents include experience certificates, salary certificates, other commercial documents etc. Once the documents are apostilled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, there is no need for further attestation by the Embassy of India, Muscat.

Source: Embassy of India, Muscat,

http://www.indemb-oman.org/pr_apostille.asp

g. SAUDI ARABIA

13. Defence Minister A K Antony to Visit Saudi Arabia, New Delhi, 11 February 2012

Defence Cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia is set to get a big boost with the Defence Minister Mr. AK Antony embarking on a two- day visit to Riyadh, beginning Monday. This is going to be the first ever visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Antony will be accompanied by a high level delegation including the Defence Secretary Mr. Shashi Kant Sharma, Vice-Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen SK Singh, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Satish Soni and Air vice Marshal MR Pawar.

In Riyadh, Mr. Antony will hold discussions with his counterpart Prince Salman bin Abdul Al Saud, besides meeting other leaders.

Current defence cooperation between the two countries includes training exchanges, ship visits and high level visits. The visit of Mr. Antony is expected to enable both sides to engage in discussions on areas where such cooperation can be expanded to mutual benefit.

Mr. Antony will also be interacting with representatives of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=80260>

14. Advisory for Indians in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, 14 February 2012

All Indian nationals residing in the Kingdom are hereby advised to follow/adhere to the prevailing rules and regulations of the country particularly on dress code and behaviour. It may be noted that holding Public function of any nature needs prior approval of the concerned local authorities. No public event should be organized without such permissions to avoid problems and consequences.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

15. Embassy of India, Riyadh starts visa services from Dammam, Riyadh, 14 February, 2012

Embassy of India is pleased to announce the commencement of visa services from its outsourced outlet at Dammam. The introduction of visa services from Dammam will help Saudi nationals and other visa seekers from the Eastern Province to take visa from Dammam itself.

The Office of M/S VFS will accept applications from Saturday to Wednesday from 8.30 AM to 3 PM.

Saudi nationals and foreigners living in the Eastern Province can now go to VFS's Outlet at Al Rasheed Al Muthlaq Building, 19th Cross, Musthashfa Street, Al Adama, Dammam.

Phone Number: 038285441 for applying and receiving Visa. .

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

16. India-Saudi Arabia Defence tie poised for a major boost: Antony, Riyadh, 14 February 2012

Ahead of his talks with his Saudi Counterpart on defence cooperation, the Defence Minister Mr. AK Antony called on King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud in Riyadh yesterday.

The meeting, which took place shortly after the arrival of Mr. Antony in Riyadh, lasted thirty minutes.

During the meeting, the two leaders expressed satisfaction that both the countries are pursuing enhanced cooperation in pursuit of the strategic partnership, especially in security, defence, economic and political fields.

Displaying enormous warmth, King Abdullah fondly remembered the role played by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to India-Saudi Arabia Relations. He recalled his visit to India in 2006 when the Delhi Declaration was signed setting forth the vision for the two countries to cooperate in various fields. The reciprocal visit by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Kingdom in 2010 raised the level of bilateral engagements to strategic level by signing the Riyadh Declarations. King Abdullah offered all assistance, including additional supply of crude oil, should India require the same. He expressed eagerness to strengthen relations with India. King Abdullah condemned all forms of terrorism. He paid rich tributes to émigré Indians who have played a significant role in enriching the economy and the social life of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Antony hoped that his discussions with Prince Salman and Prince Khalid today will lead to specific initiatives to deepen the defence exchanges to the benefit of both the countries.

Mr. Antony said the current situation in the Gulf region is cause for great concern for India and he hoped that the crisis in the region will be resolved through peaceful dialogue.

Indian Community

Later addressing the Indian Community, Mr. Antony described the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an important strategic partner of India in the region. He said the Gulf Region has an immense importance in our foreign policy. It provides more than half of our total crude oil imports. The region is perhaps the largest trading partner of India with the total two way trade of over \$130 billion in 2010-11. Mr. Antony said over 6 million Indians live and work in the region and we appreciate the assistance of their host governments towards their safety and well-being.

Talking about India's economic successes, he said, this has been achieved within the framework of our democratic and secular order.

“In this order, every Indian enjoys freedom to pursue his beliefs and aspirations and has rights to ensure he can realize his dreams with the assurance that the State will protect his unique identity and individuality. But with these freedoms and rights, we have the corresponding responsibility of ensuring that all our actions take place within the framework of the

Constitution and promote the interests of our nation. Though major challenges still remain, it is a matter of satisfaction for all of us that our Constitution remains the guardian of our nationhood and our national values”, he said.

The Defence Minister, who is on a two-day visit to Riyadh, said, India, is working closely with all countries in the Gulf region in a coordinated manner to combat terrorism and for anti-piracy measures. Mr. Antony expressed confidence that his visit will give a ‘new substance and direction’ to Indo-Saudi defence ties, which constitute an important component of the emerging strategic partnership between the two countries.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=80295>

17. India and Saudi Arabia agree to set up a Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation, New Delhi, 15 February 2012

To give a boost to the defence ties between the two countries, India and Saudi Arabia have decided to set up a Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation to work out the contours of the relationship. The decision was taken at the delegation level talks between the two countries in Riyadh on Tuesday.

The Indian delegation was led by the Defence Minister Mr. AK Antony and the Saudi delegation by his counterpart Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud. The Saudi Deputy Minister of Defence Prince Khalid Bin Sultan and senior functionaries of the Saudi Military organizations also attended the meeting. The Indian delegation included the Defence Secretary Mr. Shashi Kant Sharma, the Indian Ambassador Mr. Hamid Ali Rao, Vice-Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen SK Singh, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Satish Soni and Air vice Marshal MR Pawar.

The proposed Committee will evolve plans for cooperation in numerous areas including signing of an MoU on defence cooperation, high level reciprocal visits at all levels- political, official and Services, ship visits and conducting Passage Exercises during such visits. The Committee will also explore the possibility of signing a MoU on cooperation in hydrography, increased participation in training programmes on both sides and examine the possibility of cooperation in defence industries. Mr. Antony’s suggestion for the visit of a delegation from Saudi Arabia to see our defence production facilities in near future was accepted by Prince Salman. The latter also accepted an invitation from Mr. Antony to visit India later this year. Expressing concern at the spread of piracy in the Indian Ocean Region, Mr. Antony’s suggestion that the navies of the two countries could explore practical cooperation in the fight against piracy and an active role of the Royal Saudi Navy in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) construct were readily accepted by Prince Salman.

Reviewing the security situation in the Gulf Region, the two sides agreed that all issues need to be settled through peaceful dialogue.

Earlier, on his arrival at the Defence Ministry Headquarters in Riyadh, Mr. Antony was presented an Inter-Services Guard of Honour. Prince Khalid also hosted a lunch in honour of the visiting delegation.

Mr. Antony returned home late last night.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi

<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=80322>

18. Team of the Embassy of India, Riyadh is visiting Al- Khobar and Qatif jails, Riyadh, 17 February 2012

A team of the Embassy of India, Riyadh is visiting Dammam, Al-Khobar and Qatif jails on 18-19 February 2012 to meet Indian inmates in the jails to ascertain their welfare and also to issue Emergency Certificate to those who have completed their Jail term.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

19. Rajya Sabha Chairman will be visiting Saudi Arabia, 22 February 2012

Hon'ble Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Mr. K. Rahman Khan will be visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to attend the G-20 Speakers' Consultations in Riyadh, from 24-26 February, 2012. He will be accompanied by a 3 member delegation.

Source: Embassy of India, Riyadh

<http://www.indianembassy.org.sa/Content.aspx?ID=790&PID=691>

20. India and Saudi Arabia Discuss Enhancing Cooperation in Oil Sector, New Delhi, 23 February 2012

Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, Assistant Minister for Petroleum Affairs, Saudi Arabia held bilateral discussions with Mr. R.P.N. Singh, Minister of State for Petroleum & Natural Gas here today, on matters of bilateral cooperation in the oil and gas sector. Mr. Singh led the Indian side while Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz led the Saudi side during the delegation-level talks under the India-Saudi Arabia Energy Consultations. The Indian delegation included senior officials of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and CEO's of IOCL, ONGC, BPCL, HPCL and EIL.

After the delegation level talks, the Assistant Minister from Saudi Arabia also called on Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy, Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and held discussions on wide ranging issues related to cooperation in the hydrocarbons sector between the two countries.

The two sides discussed the World Oil Outlook, especially the growing demand for

hydrocarbons in Asia and India during the delegation level talks. Mr. R.P.N. Singh conveyed India's requirement of incremental quantities of Saudi Arabian oil imports in the years ahead considering the ongoing expansion in India's refining capacity. The Indian side also conveyed its growing requirement of LPG (Butane and Propane) considering the accelerated expansion of LPG coverage in the country's rural areas under the Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitran Yojana (RGGLVY). India imports nearly 2 million tones of LPG from Saudi Arabia. Other related issues such as the imposition of arbitrary cuts imposed by Saudi ARAMCO on supply of Butane and Propane from time to time, MRPL's request for supply of crude oil on the basis of parent company guarantee instead of letter of credit, etc. were taken up with the Saudi side.

India invited Saudi participation in upcoming investment opportunities in its petroleum upstream and downstream sector including OPaL's Petrochemical project at Dahej and OMPL's Petrochemical project at Mangalore. An offer was made to the Saudi side for considering equity participation in these projects as a strategic investor. Other proposed investment opportunities such as IOC's LNG project at Ennore, BPCL's LNG terminal at Kochi, HPCL's grass-root refinery in Vizag and IOC's petrochemical plant at Paradip were also discussed.

Since both Saudi Arabia and India are prominent actors in the International Energy Forum (IEF) comprising 88 countries, which is the world's principal vehicle for the ongoing global energy dialogue, several issues related to the IEF were also discussed.

Acknowledging India's importance as one of the fastest growing markets in the world, Saudi Arabia expressed its readiness to engage India and fulfil its energy requirements on a long-term basis. The Saudi side assured affirmative consideration of India's request for larger quantities of crude oil and LPG while also agreeing to look into the issues raised by India relating to the hydrocarbon trade and investment between the two countries.

The discussions between Saudi Arabia, a leading producer of crude oil and India, the world's 4th largest oil importer are significant as they come at a time of heightened uncertainty in the international oil markets. Saudi Arabia supplied 27 million metric tons of crude oil to India during 2010-11, making it India's largest crude oil supplier.

Source: Press Information Bureau of India, New Delhi
<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=80479>

h. SYRIA

21.Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India to United Nations on Security Council Resolution on Syria, New York, 4 February 2012

Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to start by congratulating you on assuming the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. My delegation and I look forward to working with you to make your presidency extremely successful. I had an opportunity, in an earlier incarnation, to have visited your beautiful country. I would also like to take this opportunity to compliment South Africa, Ambassador Baso Sangqu and his team, for their very wise and able stewardship of the Council during January.

Mr. President, the Syrian Arab Republic has historically played an important role in the Middle East. Prolonged instability and unrest in Syria have implications for peace and stability in the wider region.

India is concerned with the present situation in Syria that has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians and security forces personnel over the last ten months. Therefore, since the beginning of the protest, we have called for a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sections of Syrian society.

We strongly condemn all violence, irrespective of whoever the perpetrators are. We also condemn all violations of human rights. India holds the rights of expression and peaceful assembly among the fundamental values that should be respected, while ensuring stability and security of the society.

India has conveyed this message to the Syrian leadership, both bilaterally as well as along with its IBSA partners. We have impressed upon the Syrian side to abjure violence and pay heed to the aspirations of the people of Syria. This message was also contained in the Council's PRST issued in August 2011 under India's Presidency.

We are firmly of the view that a political process for resolution of the present crisis should be led by the Syrians themselves. We believe that the main role of the international community, including this Council, is to facilitate engagement of the Syrian Government with all sections of Syrian society for an inclusive political process, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians while ensuring respect for the country's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

We note that the resolution enjoins upon the government to protect its population, indicating that it should have the capacity to do so.

The League of Arab States, as an important regional organization, should play its required and historic role in promoting political dialogue among the Syrian parties. In this context, we welcomed the deployment of the League's Observer Mission across several areas in the country which had a calming effect on the level of violence and provided a more accurate picture of developments. We hope that this Mission can be resumed soon.

Our support for the Resolution is in accordance with our support for the efforts by the Arab League for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through a Syrian-led inclusive political process. We note that the resolution expressly rules out any measures under Article 42 of the Charter and calls for serious political dialogue between the Syrian government and the whole spectrum of the opposition under the auspices of the League of Arab States. We believe that the leadership of Syria is a matter for the Syrian people to decide. It would be necessary for all opposition forces in Syria to peacefully engage in constructive dialogue with the authorities. We hope that this will create a new environment for peace and facilitate a political process. This political dialogue should build upon the political reforms already announced by the Syrian leadership with necessary changes so that they find acceptance among all sections of Syrian society.

Thank You.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi

<http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530118976>

22. Statement by Mr. Vinay Kumar, acting Permanent Representative at the plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the report of the Human Rights Council, New York, 13 February 2012

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Syrian Arab Republic has, by virtue of its geographic and strategic location and the genius of its people, played an important role in the Middle East throughout the recorded history. Even in the modern time, Syria's role in the developments in the Middle East cannot be overemphasized. Prolonged instability and unrest in Syria, therefore, have implications for peace and stability in the wider region.

India is deeply concerned with the present situation in Syria that has resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians and security forces personnel over the last eleven months. We strongly condemn all violence, irrespective of whoever the perpetrators are. We also condemn all violations of human rights. India holds the rights of expression and peaceful assembly among the fundamental values that should be respected, while ensuring stability and security of the society. The problem in Syria being primarily political in nature, India has, from the

beginning of the protests, called for a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sections of Syrian society.

India has conveyed this message to the Syrian leadership, both bilaterally as well as along with its IBSA partners. We have impressed upon the Syrian side to abjure violence and pay heed to the aspirations of the people of Syria.

We are firmly of the view that a political process for resolution of the present crisis should be led by the Syrians themselves. We believe that the main role of the international community is to facilitate engagement of the Syrian Government with all sections of Syrian society for an inclusive political process, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians while ensuring respect for the country's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

The League of Arab States, as an important regional organization, should play its required and historic role in promoting political dialogue among the Syrian parties. In this context, we welcomed the deployment of the League's Observer Mission across several areas in the country which had a calming effect on the level of violence and provided a more accurate picture of developments. We have also been supportive of the efforts by the Arab League for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through a Syrian-led inclusive political process. We support the League's call for serious political dialogue between the Syrian government and the whole spectrum of the opposition under the auspices of the League of Arab States. We believe that the leadership of Syria is a matter for the Syrian people to decide.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we think that for an expeditious resolution of the problem in Syria, the League of the Arab States should facilitate peaceful engagement of all opposition forces in Syria in constructive dialogue with the authorities. We hope that this will create a new environment for peace and promote a political process. This political dialogue should build upon the political reforms already announced by the Syrian leadership with necessary changes so that they find acceptance among all sections of Syrian society.

Thank you.

Source: Permanent mission of India to United Nations, New York

<http://www.un.int/india/2012/ind1988.pdf>

23. Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India to United Nations, in explanation of vote on the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Syria, New York, 16 February 2012

Thank You Mr. President.

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria in March last year, India has been concerned at its implications within and outside Syria. We have been mindful of the important role that the Syrian Arab Republic has historically played in the Middle East. We think that prolonged instability and unrest in Syria have serious implications for peace and stability in the wider region. We have, therefore, since the beginning of the protests, called for a peaceful and inclusive political process to address the grievances of all sections of Syrian society.

We strongly condemn all violence, irrespective of whoever the perpetrators are. We also condemn all violations of human rights. India holds the rights of expression and peaceful assembly among the fundamental values that should be respected, while ensuring stability and security of society.

India has conveyed this message to the Syrian leadership, both bilaterally as well as along with its IBSA partners. We have impressed upon the Syrian side the urgent need to abjure violence and pay heed to the aspirations of the people of Syria. This message was also contained in the Council's PRST issued in August 2011 under India's Presidency. Unfortunately, the situation has continued to deteriorate. We have also witnessed several terrorist attacks in different parts of the country. Resort to violence by all sides in the crisis remains unabated.

We are firmly of the view that a political process for resolution of the present crisis should be led by the Syrians themselves. We believe that the main role of the international community, including this Assembly, is to facilitate engagement of the Syrian Government with all sections of Syrian society for an inclusive political process, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians while ensuring respect for the country's independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

The League of Arab States, as an important regional organization, should play its required and historic role in promoting political dialogue among the Syrian parties. Our support for the resolution adopted by this Assembly today is in accordance with our support for the efforts by the Arab League for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through a Syrian-led inclusive political process.

I would, however, like to express our regret at the procedure followed in this assembly during the week in discussing the situation in Syria. Exceptions to established procedures are best avoided to maintain the credibility of any institution. Also, it would do us immense good if there is greater readiness from all quarters to negotiate a text with a view to reaching a consensus.

Mr. President, my delegation notes that the resolution just adopted expressly reaffirms that all countries should refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or act in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. The resolution also condemns all violence, irrespective of where it comes from, and calls for serious political dialogue between the Syrian government and the whole spectrum of the opposition under the auspices of the League of Arab States. We believe that the leadership of Syria is a matter for the Syrian people to decide. We call on all opposition forces in Syria to peacefully engage in constructive dialogue with the authorities.

In this connection, Mr. President, we have noted the decision of the Syrian leadership to hold a referendum on a new draft constitution on 26 February and organize multi-party elections within next three months. We hope that this decision will create a new environment for peace and facilitate a political process.

I Thank You.

Source: Permanent mission of India to United Nations, New York

<http://www.un.int/india/2012/ind1989.pdf>

MULTILATERAL ISSUES/ REGIONAL ISSUES

i. INDIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

24. Wyant Lecture by Ambassador Nirupama Rao at the Emmanuel College, Boston – “Role of India in the changing landscape in the 21st Century”, Washington D.C, 15 February 2012

...We have been witnessing unprecedented developments in West Asia. As a democracy, India is of firm belief that people of all countries have the right to choose their own destiny and shape their own future as they deem fit. For us, the region is of immense importance. Not only do we have civilizational links with that region, but it is also home to about six million Indians whose welfare is a matter of priority. It is a region that accounts for more than two-third of our petroleum imports, contributes over US \$ 100 billion in export markets and billions of dollars in remittances. We have therefore immense stakes in the peace and stability of the region. This is an objective that we share with the broader international community as well. Indeed we have enhanced our bilateral consultations with the US to exchange perspectives on the changes underway and to increase mutual understanding. Even though we might have differences on some tactical approaches there is overall agreement on the long term objective that people’s aspirations in these countries must be respected. As a freedom-loving people, committed to the secular ideals of our founding fathers, our hope is that the secular, democratic spirit that we saw blooming at the outset of the Arab Spring early last year, does not dissipate, to be overcome by extreme ideologies...

Source: Embassy of India, Washington D.C

<http://www.indianembassy.org/prdetail1867/wyant-lecture-by-ambassador-nirupama-rao-at-the-emmanuel-college%2C-boston---andquot%3Brole-of-india-in-the-changing-landscape-in-the-21st-centuryandquot%3B>

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